

INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION



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The origins of Hinduism trace the religion's roots to the Indus valley civilization circa 4000 to 2200 BCE. This was an advanced civilization that boasted:

- Own language
- Planned cities
- Sophisticated plumbing and sewage systems
- **Vast trading network**
- No standing army
- No monuments to rulers
- Thriving mercantile ruling class



The Vedic Period



The predominance of female figurines and seals depicting a goddess by the Indus people is generally regarded as evidence of the worship of a mother goddess who presided over fertility and birth and who may have acted as guardian and protector of the dead.

The oldest and most important of all Hindu sacred texts are the *Vedas*:

The oldest *Vedas* were composed about 1500 BCE and written down about 600 BCE.

The *Vedas* contain hymns, incantations, and rituals from ancient India.

CATEGORIZING HINDUISM IS CONFUSING



Polytheistic - one which worships multiple deities: gods and goddesses. Brahman is simultaneously visualized as a triad: **Brahma**, the Creator; **Vishnu**, (Krishna) the Preserver; and **Shiva**, the Destroyer.

Monotheistic religion, because it recognizes only one supreme God: Brahman, that all reality is a unity.

Brahma the Creator who is continuing to create new realities



Vishnu, (Krishna) the Preserver, who preserves these new creations.



Shiva, the Destroyer, is at times compassionate, at times destructive.



KARMA



Karma is the accumulated sum of one's good and bad deeds. Karma is the universal law of cause and effect. The critical and subtler understanding of karma is that each action has a reaction and that this cycle is endless. Thus, if one sows goodness, one reaps goodness. Conversely, if one sows evil, one will reap evil.

Karma determines how you will live your next life. Eventually, one can escape *samsara* and achieve enlightenment. The unequal distribution of wealth, prestige, suffering are thus seen as natural consequences for one's previous acts, both in this life and in previous lives.

Hindus strive to be virtuous in thought, word, and actions. When one can work without expecting rewards, Hindus believe that society as a whole benefits.



Dharma

- *Dharma* is to fulfill your moral duty in this life. By fulfilling your *Dharma* and producing good *Karma*, you can be released from *Samsara*.

MEDITATION



Meditation is often practiced, with Yoga being the most common. The goal of meditation is to concentrate so you can reach the real self within you and become one with Brahman.

Prayer & Offerings



Offerings are also often used to assist the poor. Other activities include daily devotions, public rituals, and *puja*, a ceremonial meal for a god.

TOLERANT & ELASTIC



Hinduism has a deserved reputation of being highly tolerant of other religions. Hindus have a saying: "*The truth is One, but different Sages call it by Different Names.*"